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OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY :

ITS CHRONOLOGY, APPARENT DISCREPANCIES
AND UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Halifax Young Men's Christian Association,

DECEMBER 22ND, 1857,

BY

REV. GEORGE W. HILL, M.A.,
PROFESSOR PASTORAL THEOLOGY, KING'S COLLEGE, WINDSOR.

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PREFACE.

THE following Lecture has been compiled from various sources. It has no pretensions to originality beyond the mere form in which the various facts, and the greater part of the deductions, are presented. Published at the request of others, the author takes the opportunity of endeavouring to make it more fully a guide to the study of Old Testament History. With this end in view the following list of works is subjoined. The greater part of those mentioned were consulted during the preparation of this short Essay,—one or two not actually referred to were not within reach at the time of writing. The student in Theology, or the general reader may find it convenient to possess the titles of a few books written on the subjects treated of in the succeeding pages.

On the connection of Sacred and Profane History there are three standard works which take different periods and complete the subject.

1. Shuckford, Samuel, Sacred and Profane History connected, 2 vols., 8vo.
2. Russel, M., Sacred and Profane History connected, 3 vols., 8vo.
3. Prideaux, H., The Old and New Testament connected, 3 vols., 8vo.

These books are placed in the order in which they are to be read.

Usher, Archbishop, The Annals of the World. fol. 1658. (It brings the history of the world down to the destruction of Jerusalem.)

Hales, Wm., *A new Analysis of Chronology*, 4 vols., 8vo., 1830.

Calmet, A., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols., 4to.

Stackhouse, *History of the Bible*.

Horne, Thomas Hartwell, *An Introduction to the critical study and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, 4 vols., 8vo.
(An edition of this valuable work lately published tampers with the subject of Inspiration and has been disowned by the venerable author, the objectionable portions having been introduced by his assistants.)

Gray, R., *Key to the Old Testament and Apocrypha*, 1 vol., 8vo.

Tomline, Bishop, *Elements of Christian Theology*, 2 vols., 8vo.

Grotius, Hugo, *De veritate Religionis Christianae*, by the Rev. J. E. Middleton, 12mo., 1849. The English notes and illustrations being particularly valuable.

Keith, A., *Demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion*, 12mo., 1838.

Cumming, J., *Is Christianity from God*, 12mo., 1 vol.

Eadie, J., *Biblical Dictionary*. (Recently compiled and containing much that is modern in scientific illustration.)

Graves, Dean, *on the Pentateuch*.

The list might, of course, be extended to a great length, but the above will suffice to show that there is ample aid for those desirous of studying the History contained in the sacred writings.

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LECTURE.

History is always instructive, generally interesting; historians, however, do not always make this impression. When they fail, the fault lies with them, and not with the subject. The annals of the most obscure nations, whether derivable from hieroglyphics or tradition abound with useful information, and may be rendered serviceable as well as amusing to those of more civilized times. Proportion, indeed, exists in this as in other studies: the records of some centuries being more fruitful than those of others. In the Old Testament Scriptures we have a possession of infinite historical truth. Upon its pages are written the narrative of events and circumstances occurring in a time the most distant from the present, penned by authors of consummate skill and heavenly wisdom. In this venerable volume we have the most ancient History treated by the most trustworthy Historians:—the best material wrought by the most skillful workmen; the most interesting period sketched by the most faithful annalists. We have the history of not one nation or people, but of all the kindreds of the earth as they meet at the door of the ark; or still further back, as they were found within the garden of Eden. The antiquity not of the book alone, but also of the events which it records invest it with a peculiar value. Far beyond the date of all other reliable records it reaches back, and passing behind the veil which usually hides primeval scenes from sight, sheds a light even upon the dark unshapen world. This one feature distinguishes it from all other histories; in tracing back through them to the origin of all things, there is one great barrier beyond which the eager aspirant for information cannot go; a boundary over which he cannot step; a mighty gulf which he cannot cross. The deluge forms this barrier; with its history that of almost every nation begins; their archives may be ransacked in vain for even a hint of times anterior to the mighty flood. Some scriptural accounts have been borrowed and worked up in form and

color adapted to the writer's age and country. But the sacred historian leads us back to the unknown time (as it is styled by Varro); floats us safely over the broad expanse of waters; lands us in the antediluvian world, where they built houses and planted fields, bought of one and sold to another, were married and given in marriage; affords us a picture of the Leviathan, that Great Eastern ship as she floated on the waters with her precious freight; leads us still from generation to generation until we come to that "beginning in which God created heaven and earth." Nor is it antiquity alone that clothes the volume with such interest and value; but "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are amassed in the five books of Moses have enriched the whole civilized earth "They have been," says Dr. A. Clarke, "a kind of text book to almost every writer on geology, geography, chronology, astronomy, natural history, ethics, jurisprudence, political economy, theology, poetry and criticism from the time of Moses to the present day. Books to which the choicest writers and philosophers in Pagan antiquity have been deeply indebted and which were the text books to all the prophets; books from which the flimsy writers against divine revelation, have derived their natural religion, and all their moral excellence; books written in all the energy and purity of the incomparable language in which they were composed; and lastly, books which, for importance of matter, variety of information, dignity of sentiment, accuracy of facts, impartiality, simplicity, and sublimity of narration, tending to improve and ennoble the intellect, and ameliorate the physical and moral condition of man, have never been equaled, and can only be paralleled by the Gospel of the Son of God."

Our purpose, at present, is to treat briefly of the chronology of the Bible,—to harmonize some apparent discrepancies in the narrative,—to produce some undesigned coincidences, and here and there to connect with the sacred, the profane Historian. So ample is the range that the limits of a lecture will not suffice to contain more than a mere notice of each topic now mentioned. The ulterior object will be gained if the sacred Volume will henceforth be read by any with increased interest; and those who may have heretofore considered it as a dull unengaging book shall be induced to award it a proper place, even the highest rank among written records. Nine and thirty treatises compose the Old Testament. Some of these are historical, some prophet-

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ical, and others devotional. The five books of Moses, or the Pentateuch, belong to the first class, and with the exception of the book of Job, are the most ancient. The first in order is also the first in time and commences with an account of the creation, which according to the chronology attached to the authorized or King James' Version of the Bible, took place 4004 years before the birth of Christ. Whether this be the correct date is questionable. There are some, and these not a few, learned men who believe it incorrect, and assign a much earlier period for this event. Reference is not now made to the Geologist who sees in the works of nature and reads from the rocks a testimony, that the earth sprang into existence long ages since;—on the controversy or attempt to harmonize "Genesis and Geology" we do not enter. Whether the six days spoken of by the inspired author were literal, or successive durations of time, we leave for others to discuss. It is sufficient for our purpose that the Jewish legislator announces two facts, the origin of the world as the work of God, and that on the sixth or last day previous to cessation from work he made man. From his creation and speedy fall we date as from a given point; how many centuries have elapsed from that moment to the present the learned, as already stated, are not agreed. Although chronological inquiry is considered uninteresting and rather mystical, we will venture to answer the question which arises, By what process are these dates ascertained, and why is there any difference of opinion? Many, unquestionably, have never framed the inquiry, and putting it into language demanded on what authority events and circumstances have been assigned to certain points of time. The figures 4004 B. C. meet us in the very opening page of our Bibles, and familiar with the date we have assigned to it no special idea. This and all the succeeding numbers which appear in the margin of our translation were inserted on the authority of Archbishops Usher and Lloyd, "prelates who were esteemed as well for their learning, as for their zeal and integrity. In chronology, it is well known, the name of Usher as well as the greater name of Newton has long ceased to command any special attention. The primacy from the respect which he entertained for Hebrew literature put an undue degree of confidence in the opinions of the Rabbis; the philosopher, on the other hand, assured himself that a basis for an infallible system of chronology might be found in the deductions of

physical astronomy.* Now, we may take these two men, as the exponents of two differing systems;—the one being that of reckoning backwards the specific periods mentioned in Holy Writ and profane history, and when these are wanting, counting the successive generations in a retrograde manner until the father of the human race is reached. The other mode is by astronomical calculation. In the reverse style of computation it will be readily seen that difficulties arise the further we ascend the stream of time, for in the earliest portion of the Old Testament we have to rely solely upon that uncertain standard, the average duration of human life and the length of a generation. "From the Exodus of Israel to the Era of Christianity chronology shines with a much clearer and more steady light, conducting the historical student to results which not only harmonise with the leading details of the sacred annals, but also correspond to the general condition of society at that distant period, and to records of all contemporary kingdoms."† One example may be adduced. It will show how an approximation is made to the creation. St Paul's address to the people of Antioch furnishes us with a date proving of great value in fixing the limits of a certain interval. He reminded the Jews that about the time of 40 years, the Almighty suffered their manners in the wilderness. "And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Caanan, he divided their land to them by lot. And *after that* he gave them judges about the space of 450 years until Samuel the prophet. And afterwards they desired a king, and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin by the space of forty years." These numbers added make 591 years. Josephus states the period of time which elapsed to have been 592 complete years. Having this interval accurately determined, we can readily discover the date of the Hebrews's departure from Egypt—as follows. Beginning with the birth of Christ we know, not only from Scripture but profane History, that 588 years elapsed from the Babylonish captivity; passing through the successive reigns of the Kings of Judah up to the building of the temple by Solomon there is an aggregate of 416 years, while we have already shown, from Paul's speech at Antioch, that from the foundation of the temple back to the Exodus comprised 592 years. But

* Russel's Connection, vol. i, p. 15.
 † " " " " p. 14.

we have another determined period of time; the seed of Abraham was to be 430 years in the land of Egypt, nor was it until the expiration of this period that their affliction ceased. If we add these clearly established sums together they carry us to a time more than two thousand years anterior to the birth of Christ. From the call of Abraham to the Deluge, we are led by the ages assigned to succeeding generations, and from the Deluge back to the creation by the same process;—the length of life assigned to each of the ten generations. This retrograde manner of calculation is thus exemplified in general, but as eminent men have arrived at very different results from the same mode of calculation, it will be well to see the cause. Hales and Jackson are two leading chronologists—employing the same method, but at variance with Usher and Lloyd. From four sources these scholars have derived their information—the Hebrew text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint and the Jewish Historian Josephus. And those who are not acquainted with the writings of the ancient Historians must be surprised when they find that the system of dates which has been adopted in the authorized version of scripture differs from the chronological conclusions which are now usually held to the full amount of 1400 years. According to Usher and Lloyd who follow the Hebrew Text and Samaritan Pentateuch the world was created, as stated, B. C. 4004. According to Hales and Jackson who follow the Septuagint and Josephus the creation is placed B. C. 5411. Here is the difference of 1400 years. We may naturally ask, Why is the authority of the Greek translation and the Jewish annalist ranked higher than the Hebrew original and its Samaritan rival? The reply is this. Because it has been thought and almost satisfactorily proved that the Jews altered the chronology—changed the numbers,—since the true text told against them, who in spite of prophecy rejected the Messiah. The case was this. “The Christians were wont to produce the testimonies of Scripture against the Jews out of the Greek version. The Jews appealed from this to the Hebrew text which the Christians did not understand, and in order to avoid the arguments of Christians they translated their original scripture differently from the LXX.”* Thus, but little, or rather, no confidence is to be reposed upon numbers thus surreptitiously supplied. It depends, of course, up-

* Russel's Connection, vol. i., p. 85.

on which of these texts is followed, what numbers we shall use.

We may profitably adduce an example of the astronomical mode of calculation employed by Sir I. Newton and others, giving but a passing notice to the observation of the celebrated astronomer La Place, "that 4004 B. C. the major axis of the earth's orbit coincided with the line of the equinoxes, and consequently the true and mean equinoxes were united, thus constituting a remarkable astronomical epoch."* Dr Hales has adduced from astronomy a species of evidence for the true date of the book of Job, fixing the time of the Patriarch's trial to 184 years before the birth of Abraham. The instance is really a curious one and the argument may be apparent to all, though the detail might require some knowledge of the science used. Two stars are referred to in the book of Job,—the language is familiar—"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion;" or again, "which makes Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades and the chambers of the south?" By a retrograde calculation, the principal stars referred to by the name of Chimam and Chesil, or Taurus and Scorpio, are found to have been the cardinal constellations of spring and autumn in the time of Job. The complete explanation and proof of the statement may be found in the Analysis of Chronology by the discoverer of this fact, who knowing the longitude of the stars at present and the date of Job's existence, finds the interval exactly corresponding to the time which would make them vernal and autumnal constellations.† There is then a deep and beautiful meaning in the question addressed to Job, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion. The "sweet influences of Pleiades" alludes to the genial season of spring with its soft, balmy air unchaining the frozen fettered earth, snapping asunder the shackles which bind vegetation, and causing the streams to flow freely and gladden the earth. While the "bands of Orion" represent the stern rigors of winter, as he comes with gloomy, harsh step, to lock up the wonders of the animate world, check, for a season, the growth of all herbs and trees, as it were, fetter the whole domain of nature. If, these, then, are the stars of the opening and closing seasons of the year, how full of meaning is the highly poetic language

* Bagster's Comp. Bible, App. Chron. Tables, and Cumming's Evidences of Christianity.

† Horne's Introduction, vol. iii., Book of Job.

employed ! Another curious phenomenon is produced which, though not strictly connected with the subject, may be allowed a place, in consideration of the season of the year—the approach of Christmas. Some astronomers have ventured to correct what they believe to be a wrong impression in reference to the “star in the East” by which the Magi were led to Bethlehem. The ordinary belief is, that the star was a miraculous appearance. These rather consider it as the subservience of nature to the Divine purpose. We need not accept their conclusion ; but we may feel interested in their reasoning. In the year of Rome 747 on the 20th of May there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the 20th degree of the constellation Pisces ; on the 27th October in the same year another conjunction of the same planets took place in 16th degree of Pisces ; and on 12th November a third in 15th degree of the same sign. The motion of the star W. 9, 10, was from S. E. to S. W. the direction of Bethlehem. On these two last occasions the planets were so near that an ordinary eye would regard them as one star of surpassing brightness. Suppose the Magi to have seen the first of these conjunctions they saw it actually in the “East” for on the 20th May it would rise shortly before the sun. If they then took their journey and arrived at Jerusalem in a little more than five months, if they performed the route from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in the evening, as is implied, the November conjunction in 15th Pisces would be before them *in the direction of Bethlehem* coming to the meridian about 8 o’clock P. M.* These circumstances appear to form a remarkable coincidence with the history of the Evangelist, but it is rather, perhaps, the result of ingenious reasoning, than the self-evident conclusion produced by manifest harmony. “It is an idle labor, and will prove of disservice to religion, to add miracles of our own making to those which the Scriptures set before us,” but we must be careful to resist every device of rationalism, every phase of neology. And the foregoing view is more useful, perhaps, as a beacon to warn than as a light to guide us.

The value of these chronological inquiries is very great to the student of Old Testament History. Having settled the time of any particular occurrence, and harmonising it with the modes of computation employed by other nation, as the “Olympiad,” the

* Alford's Gr. Test. vol. i.

"Julian Period," the "Building of Rome," he can bring the customs and manners, the arts and literature of these to bear upon the Jewish people. This science of computing and adjusting periods of time, shews also the order and connexion of the various events recorded in the Bible, enabling the scholar to ascertain the accomplishment of many of the prophecies.

In our attempt to ascertain the true date of events, and the length of stated periods, let us learn a lesson concerning time, which may be applicable to ourselves. The true chronologist will look back upon his own past as well as that of others. We have reverted to a long interval of time, the thousands of years between the present and the creation of man. How vast, compared with this—the shortest day of the fast closing year. And how solemn the thought that one day the term itself shall have no meaning, when the angel swears by him that liveth for ever and ever that time shall be no more,—but shall be merged in eternity, the stream absorbed and lost in the boundless ocean. The longest series of years is nothing in comparison to that unbounded æon into which we shall yet be ushered. May we be ready against that brief but all important time, when "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye the archangel's trumpet shall sound and the Son of God appear!"

In taking a rapid survey of the History contained in the Old Testament, a few of the apparent discrepancies and difficulties may be adduced with their solutions. By some the first three chapters of the book of Genesis are stated to be an ingenious philosophical fable, invented by Moses after the example of the ancient Greek writers; for the purpose of giving greater weight to his legislative enactments,—accounting for the origin of human evil,—and as an introduction to a history, great part of which they consider poetic fiction. The reply is brief. The statements made in these chapters are as plainly and as frequently referred to as any in the succeeding portions of the Book. The creation as there recorded is referred to as a fact, as also the temptation, the subsequent fall, and the promise of a Saviour. If we reject these, we may reject the whole.* Among other objections gravely brought forward by cavillers as inconsistencies in the narrative are the following: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." On the fourth day succeeding "God said, Let there be

* Horne's Intr. Gray's Key to O. T. Bp. Tomline's Elements

lights in the firmament of heaven—and let them be for lights to give light upon the earth.” If the light was first created, how can the sun and moon be said to give light, or, as sometimes put, how, if the sun be the source of light, could there have been light four days previous to its creation? The difficulty vanishes by a reference to the original, or to the marginal reading. God “made two great *light-bearers*.” He collected the parts of light into the sun and made it to be the source whence that light should be shed forth over the globe. The sun and moon may have existed millions of years before this, but they were now made to sustain a relationship which they had not sustained before, that of lighting it by their rays, and dividing the day from the night. *

Another inconsistency adduced against the sacred narrative is found in the statement put forth by infidels respecting the rainbow. It is said that a rainbow must have existed previous to its mention after the flood, and yet it is there spoken of as being instituted. Our translation would give this some countenance, asserting that when Noah went forth from the ark, God said, “I do set my bow in the cloud,” as a symbol that the waters of the ocean shall never again so overflow as to destroy the inhabitants of the world. Now the literal rendering is, “I do *appoint* my bow in the cloud: the very expression showing that it had existed before and was only now made use of as a sign of God’s future purposes. If there were raindrops, a mist and sunbeams before the flood, there must have been rainbows: since the rainbow is produced by the refraction of the rays of light from the drops of water on which they fall. But the Bible does not assert that God created the rainbow immediately after the flood, but that He then applied it to this special use, just as He applied the twelve stones set up after the children of Israel had crossed the Jordan for a sign to posterity. Not that the stones were then made new, but applied to a new purpose.”†

The objection is made to the historical announcement,—that men before the flood lived to a thousand years. All present experience proves, say some, that mankind could not possibly have lived so long. To omit any conjecture upon the difference of climate occasioned by the overflowing of the waters, and the

* Keith’s Evidences. Cumming’s Evidences.

† Shuckford’s Connexion. Cumming’s Evidences.

shortened life in consequence, we cannot but notice that there was a reason for the longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs. It was necessary to perpetuate and maintain revelation in the world; as there was no written record, it was needful that the living witnesses of the word spoken by God should have many years added to their lives. Hence Adam, Methusaleh and Noah were three links that outlasted two thousand years. Methusaleh had conversed with Adam and heard from him the sad story of his temptation and his fall; while Noah talked with Methusaleh and received from him the narrative which he had heard from Adam. The purity and progress of divine truth was thus secured by the great length of life attained by these ancient fathers of the world. There is nothing to disprove, while there is every independent reason to believe it.*

It has been objected to the account given of the Ark, first, that the vessel as constructed was not of sufficient capacity for the purpose mentioned; secondly, that it was not built upon scientific principle, and could not have borne itself and its burden on the waters. Compared with the "Leviathan," the great ship built upon the "Thames," the ark was smaller and of less capacity in every way. The comparative view presents us with the difference of size. According to ordinary calculation the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet broad, and 45 feet high. The Leviathan is 680 feet in length, 83 feet in breadth, and 60 feet in height. The tonnage of each is enormous, but that of the modern ship vastly greater than the vessel built by Noah. While the ship of former days was less in size than that of present, the proof is given that it is possible to construct such a fabric, and that this was formed on scientific principles, the proportions correct and the plan natural. But it was not reserved for Brunel to show the folly of the old cry of "impossibility" to Noah's ark; some of the ocean steamers of the Cunard line had already proved that the building of such a ship was within the limits of possibility, and the only question remaining is that of the capacity of the ship for her vast requirements. On the supposition that the deluge swept over the surface of the whole earth, it must be borne in mind that the ark was called upon to contain nothing but the animals and their food. No great proportion was occupied, as are modern steam ships, with the machinery and fuel

* Keith's Evidences. Shuckfold's Evidences.

requisite for a voyage. The whole interior was devoted to the creatures and their sustenance. According to Calmet* and other learned men, who some years since calculated the number of animals that were housed by Noah, the ark would have held more than five times the necessary number of creatures, and more than five times the requisite quantity of food to maintain them for twelve months. But we must consider this as wholly extravagant, and necessarily incorrect, as it is based upon incorrect data—the pairs of four-footed animals being more than Buffon has stated them, as also the birds. “Whether every species of animal was in the ark is a question, the answer to which is modified by the opinion formed as to the extent of the deluge, *i. e.*, whether it were universal in the literal sense, or only extended so far as the race of mankind had increased. On this point various opinions have been given: but the majority of critics and judges are now decidedly in favour of a limited inundation. The language of the narrative does not necessarily imply that it was universal, except that it overwhelmed all flesh. In many geographical statements in scripture the word *all* has only a limited signification,—“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven”—where the nations actually meant are specified, and those but a few of the numerous countries of the world.”† Even a better instance, if possible, is that of the Evangelist Matthew. “There went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.” Now the term “*all*” could not be interpreted literally, for we have no reason to suppose that every individual, man, woman, and child was present at the administration of the ordinance of baptism. Thus the expression used in reference to the flood, may not necessarily teach a universal deluge; and if partial only, the ark, of course, need not have been so extensive as it otherwise would have been.

The cause of this fearful calamity was undoubtedly the prevalent iniquity. The particular phase manifested was probably murder in its most fearful form. “The earth was filled with violence,” and immediately upon the cessation of the waters, God gave Noah special laws, before unheard of, in reference to this crime.‡ It is impossible to conceive the amount of wretchedness

* Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible.

† Eadie's Biblical Dictionary.

‡ Shuckford's Conn., vol. i.

and misery, and woe throughout the world, when God, in his inscrutable wisdom, permits such fearful scenes as have taken place during the last year in India, without opening the earth to swallow up the fiends, or sending down fire to consume them. What must have been the nature and amount of iniquity when the Lord overwhelmed the countless multitudes, and washed out, as it were, the stains of blood which polluted the face of the earth. It is bad now, but surely worse by far then.

I must briefly touch here, upon the accounts which we have of these early days in profane writers. For although the annals of most nations date from the flood some one or two pretend to reach beyond it. Let us connect the sacred and secular in this place. Three celebrated historians and collectors of antiquities demand particular notice. Berosus, who wrote the history of the Chaldeans; Sanchoniathon, that of the Phœnicians; while Manetho compiled an account of the Egyptians. The first of these relates a story so similar to Moses' account of the flood, that the one is evidently a copy of the other. The number of generations from the first man until Xisuthrus was ten: he was warned in a dream that mankind should be destroyed by a flood upon a certain day, and that he should build a sort of ship, and go into it with his friends and kindred, should make a provision of meat and drink, and take into his vessel fowls and four-footed beasts. Xisuthrus acted accordingly. The flood came, and beginning to abate Xisuthrus let out some birds, which finding no food nor place to rest on returned to the ship again. After seven days the birds were once more sent out, but they came back daubed with mud; some days after he let them go a third time, and they returned to the ship no more."* Who requires to be told that the story of Berosus and of Moses are the same? I will not weary the audience by bringing forward the various particulars alluded to by profane historians, each confirming the Mosaic account of the creation and the patriarchal ages. It is an indisputable fact that the most ancient traditions remarkably agree with Moses' account of the creation of the world, the fall of man, the deluge, and the dispersion of mankind. "These, recorded by the nations upon the vast continent of Asia, bear a strong resemblance to each other, and to the narrative in the sa-

* Faber, *Horæ Mosaicæ*. Shuckford's *Conn.* Bp. Tomline's *Elements*

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ered history, and evidently contain the fragments of one original truth, which was broken by the dispersion of the patriarchal families, and corrupted by length of time, allegory, and idolatry. From this universal concurrence on this head, one of these things is necessarily true; either that all these traditions must have been taken from the author of the Book of Genesis, or that the author of the Book of Genesis made up his history from some or all such traditions as were already extant; or, lastly, that he received his knowledge of past events by revelation. Were then all these traditions taken from the Mosaic history? It has been shown by Sir William Jones and Mr Maurice that they were received too generally and too early to make this supposition even possible; for they existed in different parts of the world in the very age when Moses lived. Was the Mosaic history composed from the traditions then existing? It is certain that the Chaldeans, the Persians, the most ancient inhabitants of India, and the Egyptians, all possessed the same story: but they had, by the time of Moses, wrapped it up in their own mysteries, and disguised it by their own fanciful conceits: and surely no man could be persuaded that out of this heterogeneous mass of fable and mysticism, Moses could unaided, and by human sagacity alone, select the true and reject the false. There was no mode by which he could sift the grain, let go the chaff and secure the kernel. But his plain recital does unfold the mystery and show the origin of the world—carrying on its face such proof of its truthfulness as shows it to have been revealed to him by God himself.* Our present relationship with India offers a reason for the introduction of their version of the ancient event. The mythologists of Hindostan teach that during the time of the flood their principal goddess and god assumed the forms of the ship Arghha and its mast; that thus metamorphosed they were wafted in safety over the great deep; and that when the waters abated, they flew away in the shape of two doves. The Indian ship Arghha is certainly the same as the mystic ship of the Egyptian Osiris, which was called Argo, Theba and Baris, and within which the god was annually set afloat upon the river Nile. From Egypt those rites were brought into Greece, and the romantic tale of Jason founded on it, who during the voyage acted agreea-

* Bp. Tomline's Elements, vol. 1, p. 97.

bly to observations made upon the flight of doves sent forth from the ship.* Thus surely do we trace a connection between sacred and profane history.

We must pass rapidly by the tower of Babel, merely glancing at the vestiges of that strange attempt to reach the heavens. Answering the cavil of semi-learned infidels—that the whole story is absurd,—by demanding evidence against it, and producing two eminent historians, Herodotus and Strabo, as witnesses that there was a tower built in Chaldæa, called the tower of Belus, and that there were walks upon it along which two chariots could drive abreast. It was here that the confusion of tongues was brought about, and from hence the diffusion of mankind took place. That question of so much interest to some, the origin and progress of language in its varied forms, finds here a new starting-point. And though volumes have been written and published upon the subject no certain proof has been assigned to any one language now extant as the source and fountain of all others. The craniologist informs us that science offers indisputable evidence that the human race is plainly not sprung from one common parent. The heads of the European, African, Asiatic and American are of different shapes, and therefore they are all not descended from a single origin. Is not the solution of the problem more reasonably and less dangerously found in this Mosaic record of the scattering abroad the human family. When the language was confounded were there not distinguishing characteristics assigned to the heads of families, whereby they and their posterities were distinguished. If the mental endowment was miraculous, as we must believe, why should it not have been accompanied by a physical change of aspect?

"The next great event, alike influential on the fate of the world and calculated ultimately to bring all mankind into one family—the household of faith—was the call of Abraham, and the covenant of God with the patriarch, whose name is no less renowned than that of Babylon. And like another nail fastened in a sure place, that name was given by the Lord."† A period of 430 years elapsed from the time when God first spoke to the "father of the faithful" until Moses led forth the child-

* Faber, *Horæ Mosaicæ*.

† Keith's *Evidences*, p. 130.

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ren of Israel from the land of Egypt. "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and *thirty* years." In Stephen's speech, recorded in the "Acts of the Apostles," he quotes the bondage as lasting *four hundred* years. Here is a difference of 30 years; too many in proportion to the whole number to have been omitted for the purpose of using round numbers. On a little investigation, however, we discover Isaac, whom God promised to Abraham, was not born for 25 years after the call. Stephen probably enumerates from this as the epoch, and therefore uses the number 400, as a round number for 405—this difference being comparatively small, and though 30 were too many to omit, 5 were not so.

After a lapse of 25 years an occurrence familiar to all took place upon Moriah. Here again we meet with the profane historian. And although we need not repeat the whole story, we may gather enough from the Phœnician antiquities collected by Sanchoniatho to mark the resemblance in narrative—an evident imitation of Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son. Chronus had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman; he circumcised himself and all his family, and sacrificed this only legitimate son as Abraham did in spirit, and was reported by the heathen to have done in fact. Thus the historians agree, while proof can be adduced that Chronus having lived after the time of Abraham, the Phœnician narrative is a copy of the Mosaic, and not the Mosaic of the Phœnician.*

We may pass unnoticed other events until we reach the shores of the Red Sea—which according to some we too may easily cross over dry-shod. We should indeed require the alleged skill of Moses in the knowledge of the tides—its ebb and flow—and require the full forty years training which he acquired when watching the flock at Horeb, before we should dare to attempt the passage, remembering it was this "which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned." If, however, the Israelites were conducted over the Red Sea upon a recess of the tide, then *all* the particulars of Moses' account are false, and there is not a shadow of reality in the whole narration.—If Moses' skill guided them, the pillar of fire and cloud is a

* Shuckford's Connection, vol. i.

gratuitous invention. 2. The waters are said to have been a wall to them on their right hand and left, which is manifestly absurd, if there was only an ebb or reflux of the tide. 3. A gross error exists as to the wind. Moses says an *East* wind, which, if powerful enough, would have the effect he mentions, but if it was a blowing back of the tide he should have been consistent enough to have said a North or North-west wind, which alone would have effected the purpose. This colouring as well as the resemblance instituted to Alexander's passage over the sea of Pamphylia, are easily shown to be the mere cavils of unsupported and not even ingenious sceptics.*

Many interesting portions of the History must be left without comment, that we may produce a few examples of the undesigned coincidences which abound in the Old as well as in the New Testament. Coincidence consists in the concurrence or consistency of evidence. If testimony coming from two different sources perfectly agrees, and though touching upon different points harmonises in the end, we have a coincidence.—If that coincidence is manifestly undesigned, unintentional, the proof arising therefrom is proportionably stronger. The *minuteness* of a coincidence bestows greater value upon the argument founded on it; the more circuitous it is, the more difficult would it have been to fabricate: and again, if a narrative and a recapitulation of it at first sight, seem to contradict one another, but upon further investigation are ascertained to agree, then the proof of the truth and reality of the whole is augmented.†

I may observe in reference to the Pentateuch that the Book of Deuteronomy is a recapitulation or summary of the three Books which precede it—Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.—The consistency of the direct history and this concise enumeration of facts and events forty years afterward is very striking. In delivering, for instance, rules for purification from leprosy, and also from pollution by the presence of dead bodies, Moses speaks in a different way in the narrative and the resume. In the Book of Leviticus he gives directions for the purification of a house from leprosy after they had come into the land of Canaan, but makes no mention of a tent. On the contrary, in

* Shuckford's Connection, vol. i.

† Graves on the Pentateuch, vol. i., and Paley's Horae Paulinae.

the purification from the presence of dead bodies he mentions only a tent and not a house. How is this to be explained?—

When Moses writes in Leviticus the children of Israel were living in tents. Rules had been given regarding the purification of those very materials of which the tents were made, hence no necessity existed for specially mentioning them: but when they came to live in Canaan they would occupy houses, and thus it was needful to specify how the dwelling, formed of different materials, was to be purified. Again, all the rules for purification from the pollution of a dead body being equally applicable whether in house or tent, the latter, in which they were living at the time, as is natural, is mentioned, leaving it to apparent circumstances to suggest the necessary alteration. All this *bespeaks reality*; and is such as never could have entered a fabricator's head.

In the 14th chapter of Numbers the Lord said to those who murmured at the spies' report, "As I live your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness: and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." In the 20th chapter, containing the sum of all Israel just previous to their entrance into the promised land, the following strong language occurs, "These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, * * * but among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness.—And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." Could anything be stronger than this? Yet we are told that Eleazar the son of Aaron, who was over twenty years of age when the curse was pronounced, entered the land of rest. We find him discharging his duties in the tabernacle long after the passage over the river, and no explanation offered respecting him, while Moses and Aaron were excluded from the Holy Land for a completely different reason. But the explanation is not wanting. We are in possession of it, and can harmonise the apparent contradiction. By a little close attention to the language of the doom, it will be observed that the Levites—the whole body—were

not included in the language. "Your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness: and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, doubtless ye shall not come into the land." By a reference to the 3rd chapter we find that those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron on this occasion referred to all the other tribes—"But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel: as the Lord commanded Moses." *Afterwards* indeed they were numbered, but by Moses alone, without Aaron's assistance, and their sum taken separately from all the rest. I have no doubt that the general impression concerning those who wandered in the wilderness, is that Caleb and Joshua were the only two preserved alive; such would be the inference of any casual reader, and when asked to explain how Eleazar escaped, the difficulty would have been insurmountable until the coincidence was discovered that none of Levi's tribe fell under the curse.

We mark this unintentional agreement in very minute matters. In the Book of Numbers, chapters 3rd and 4th, directions are given to each family of the Levites as to the parts of the tabernacle to be carried when removing from place to place. This subject is then dropped, and entirely new points wholly unconnected with it are discussed in the two chapters following. In the 7th chapter it is announced that the princes of Israel presented six covered waggons and twelve oxen for the service of the tabernacle. "And Moses took the waggons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two waggons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon according to their service: and four waggons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari according to their service." No reason is assigned in this—the most natural place—for the unequal division of the vehicles. So perfectly artless is the whole narrative, so devoid of all attempt to justify itself or any of the statements in it, that the author wholly omits a cause for the difference. But the 4th chapter and 31st verse specifies the duty of the sons of Merari,—the charge of their burden was "the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof;" while that of the sons of Gershon was the removal of all the light materials connected with the sacred tent. Here is a reason for the unequal distribution, and so undesignedly consistent that it becomes proof of authenticity.

Again, in chapter ii. v. 16, 17, where the order of the tribes

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in their marches is assigned to them, Reuben "shall set forth in the second rank. Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp:" according to this verse the Levites marched between the 2nd and 3rd divisions. If comparison is instituted between this and chapter x. v. 17, 19, an apparent contradiction arises. "In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah. * * * And the tabernacle was taken down: and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward bearing the tabernacle." According to this the Levites marched between 1st and 2nd, and not, as before stated, between 2nd and 3rd, divisions. The difficulty is solved by reading the 21st verse, which is introduced not at all for the apparent purpose of harmonising the jar—"And the Kohathites (who were the third family of Levites) set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the others did set up the tabernacle against they came." The less sacred parts, the exterior, the mere frame, was borne by the Gershonites and Merarites after the tribe of Judah, in order that it might be erected by the time the true tabernacle, the holy of holies, the mercy seat, had arrived. Such minute coincidences in such trifling matters are perfectly natural, on the supposition, that Moses who arranged the matter, recorded it, but wholly impossible that a forger should think of it,—so minute—so circuitous.

We may apply the same arguments to the narrative of miraculous events. In the direct history the miracles are all minutely and circumstantially narrated: the time, place, and occasion of each are specified, and both common and miraculous events are combined in one orderly and regular series. Had the Book of Deuteronomy been fabricated for the purpose of gaining credit for supernatural facts, there would be evinced a desire to magnify these miracles and obviate objections to them. Nothing of the kind occurs; the miracles are adverted to, as if there could be and had been no question of their reality, and are only incidentally introduced as motives for obedience to the laws. And it is worthy of our notice that only one miracle is mentioned in Deuteronomy which is not spoken of in the direct narrative. The wanderings of Israel in the waste, howling wilderness were at their close, their aged leader was bidding them farewell: he had brought them to the border of the promised land, but here he must part with the pilgrim host.

Their associations were with him and his with them: he had been their lawgiver and their captain, their counsellor and friend—his name must indeed have been a household word.—In looking back upon their many marchings and countermarchings upon the burning sands, he recalls his own position and one strange truth—"I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot." How natural to mention this now. The *chief* feature of the miracle was its endurance for the complete period of their wanderings, the full forty years, and brought to their notice thus, was calculated to arrest the attention and impress the mind.

One miraculous event related in the Book of Numbers, leaves, on a cursory perusal, the unpleasant impression, that no ingenuity can divest the account of contradiction. Speaking of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the language of the author runs thus, "The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them." In a subsequent chapter, where allusion is made to this event, the words are these, "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." Only from the most close investigation and induction of particulars is the plain story evolved. On patient reading of the 16th chapter we discover this fact, that Korah, together with 250 men carrying censers, went to the door of the tabernacle; Dathan and Abiram stood, along with their wives and children, at their own tent doors. Korah and his company were burnt up with fire from the Lord. Dathan and Abiram were engulfed by the earth opening at the very spot on which they stood. Their children perished with them; *Korah's* sons were not with him and therefore escaped. How then does the historian say that all were swallowed up alive in the pit when the mode of punishment was not similar for both parties? Just as any secular history would have it; when the sin and its punishment is mentioned generally general terms are used; when particular persons are specified the particular punishment is also. Who would have thought of such a device to prove the authenticity of the history? It is both too remote and too near a contradic-

tion to have been designed. It is the result of artless simplicity.

Fearful of overstepping the bounds of prudence, I will only mention one undesigned coincidence further on in the history. A mere hint must suffice : a full explanation would occupy us too long. When David lay dying he took a review of his friends and foes. As to the enemies of the crown, he prophetically denounced their doom ; as an instrument he communicated the punishment due to them (had it been personal malice he could have shown it during life) ; but for his friends, he made no mention of the son of Jonathan, his sworn ally, his bosom companion. Why was this ? A comparison of incidents informs the student that Mephibosheth was *disloyal*.—The notion usually gathered is that Ziba, the servant, slandered his master to the king of Israel. But it would rather seem that he told the truth, and that Mephibosheth waited at home when Absalom headed the rebellion in the hope that the kingdom might return to the crown of Saul. When the grand question was settled, and the crown replaced upon the monarch's brow, this time-server, this waiter upon events, came forward to render homage to the sovereign. But the greeting was instructive—"Wherefore wentest thou not forth with me, Mephibosheth ?" The answer was unsatisfactory, and the monarch cut short the colloquy. "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters ? I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land." Had the conduct of this descendant of the royal house been satisfactory to David, or capable of being placed in a good light, doubtless, the monarch for his oath's sake would have restored to him all the lands of his father.

The subject is suggestive of two important questions of the day, and in some degree calculated to answer them. Is the Bible an inspired book, and does the authorized version need revision ? The contradictions and the inconsistencies lead some to say that it cannot be the Word of God or such errors would not disfigure its pages : while passage upon passage is adduced to show a possible improvement in the translation of the original. Entirely apart from the doctrines contained in the Old Testament the historical narrative, which at first sight, abounds with antagonistic statements, has been found in some instances capable of harmony ; while the deeper the research the more do the difficulties vanish, until we are led to the belief that time

and study would prove the existence of perfect harmony, unjarring concord, throughout—the contradictions and inconsistencies being *apparent* and not *real*. It needs no learned argument to substantiate the truth that this sacred volume comes to us with the authority of the word of God. “Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” combined with that other declaration, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” is sufficient to establish in the reverent mind the simple truth. Whether inspiration be verbal or only suggestive of the thoughts is the grave theological inquiry of present days. Our sympathies are with those who, as champions for revelation, uphold the plenary inspiration of Scripture.—“In the *first place* the Scriptures contain a communication of truth from God, supernaturally given to man: and in the *second place* they contain that truth supernaturally transferred to human language, and therefore free from all mixture or addition of error.” With the various objections against this doctrine it has not been our object to deal, nor yet to adduce all the positive evidence in favour of the inspiration of Scripture. Of the great fact that the sacred writings are in truth the oracles of the living God we have abundant witness. The Book comes boldly claiming the character, while the morality it teaches attests a heavenly origin; the voice of prophecy, uttered from every page, proclaims the assertion true, and miracles unquestionably stamp the seal of God upon its words.

And does this Book, so familiar to us all, need revision?—With some few expressions now antique, some few thoughts not fully expressed, far better it should remain as now, than any attempt made to improve it. What difficulties surround the mere suggestion. The many interests to subserve stand before us at the very mention of a new translation. The Episcopalian, strong in his belief and conscious of his rectitude, demands a favourable view of his Church: the conscientious Baptist struggles for the right rendering of the contested word “baptise:” the Presbyterian, faithful to his Confession, beholds thought and language through this medium, while the Wesleyan, standing on another point, sees some questions wear a different aspect. Who shall yield? Where shall conscience sit as arbiter, or must it decline its presence at the council of the learned? We cannot part with the old familiar language; it is associated with our childhood; its words ring sweet music

in our ears ; it is bound up with the Sabbaths and Church-goings of one-seventh of our lives ; it is quoted by our statesmen and philosophers, by our historians and divines, by our scholars and authors of every shade. We meet it everywhere and everywhere it is dear to us. Absent from our homes it sounds as the accents of a beloved friend, and by our firesides we hold it as the companion of many years. We heed not the jibe and sneer of those who tell us that the Book has grown old and needs the renewing hand. It is the pillar of fire, by which thousands have crossed the desert to the land of rest, it still leads us to the city of our God. The obsolete word and the obscure phrase may occasionally becloud the sense, but compared with the plainness and simplicity of diction which adorn the sacred page, they are few in number and of trifling import. Ranked side by side with many vaunted writings, of the day the Bible stands proudly pre-eminent in its simplicity : and while its precious truths are the light and life of the world, the language in which they have been communicated has rendered it service. So long as it is used constantly in our Churches and houses, read in our hearing, forming the staple of our prayers, quoted in our books, and thus blended and bound up with us even from our childhood, so long will the English language be in some degree restrained within due limits. We are told by the most eminent scholars that Germany had no language of literature until Luther translated the Bible ; from that the Teutonic tongue became invested with dignity and importance, until it stood in the fore rank for comprehensiveness and flexibility. Our authorised version did not accomplish this for the English language, but it has been a strong check to the perversion of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, a grand centre around which the words and thoughts of the nation might revolve. Were it possible, indeed, to make a few alterations, and find men in whom all Christians could have perfect confidence as to ability and integrity, then no weighty (unanswerable) objection could be brought against the proposition. But as the practical execution is as difficult as the theoretical design is simple, we are content to feel with this Book in our hands that we have "the words of eternal life." May they be found so to you, and may the study of the law, the prophets and the psalms lead you to Him of whom they spake, even Jesus Christ, the great subject of their testimony.